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ABSTRACT

This manual contains the writing objectives and measurement specifications for grades 3, 5, and 9, for use by teachers and other educators responsible for pupil instruction, and for test development specialists involved with preparing the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills tests. The learning objectives are congruent with the "State Board of Education Rules for Curriculum." For each grade general specifications are followed by the measurement specifications for each writing objective. The general specifications include descriptions of test questions, answer choices, and test package format. Descriptions of test questions and answer choices or successful responses, plus an example question, are given for each writing objective. The writing objectives cover spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, proofreading, and composition. Beginning with the 1985-86 school year, the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills tests will be based upon the objectives in this publication. (BS)

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Texas Assessment of Basic Skills

Writing Objectives and Measurement Specifications 1986 Grade 3, Grade 5, and Grade 9

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Texas Education Agency
Austin, Texas

Texas Assessment of Basic Skills

Writing Objectives and Measurement Specifications 1986 Grade 3, Grade 5, and Grade 9

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Division of Educational Assessment
Texas Education Agency
Austin, Texas

Foreword

The learning objectives contained in this volume are congruent with the *State Board of Education Rules for Curriculum* which outlines the rules and procedures for implementation of Section 21.101 of the Texas Education Code. These objectives and the measurement specifications are provided for use by teachers and other educators responsible for pupil instruction and for test development specialists involved with the preparation of the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills tests. Beginning with the 1985-1986 school year, the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills tests will be based upon the objectives in this publication.

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Writing

List of Objectives

Grade 3

Objective 1: Recognize the correct spelling of commonly used words.

Objective 2: Demonstrate knowledge of standard punctuation.

Objective 3: Demonstrate knowledge of standard uses of capitalization.

Objective 4: Demonstrate knowledge of correct English usage.

Objective 5: Demonstrate the ability to distinguish complete sentences from fragments.

Objective 6: Demonstrate the ability to proofread a written statement.

Objective 7: *Write a composition to describe an object or picture.

Objective 8: *Write a composition to tell how to do something.

Objective 9: *Write a narrative on a specified topic.

Grade 5

Objective 1: Recognize the correct spelling of commonly used words.

Objective 2: Demonstrate knowledge of standard punctuation.

Objective 3: Demonstrate knowledge of standard uses of capitalization.

Objective 4: Demonstrate knowledge of correct English usage.

Objective 5: Demonstrate the ability to distinguish complete sentences from fragments and/or run-ons.

Objective 6: Demonstrate the ability to proofread a written statement.

Objective 7: *Write a composition to describe an object or picture.

Objective 8: *Write a composition to tell how to do something.

Objective 9: *Write a narrative on a specified topic.

Objective 10: *Write a composition in which two or more ideas/objects/places are classified according to specified criteria and described.

Objective 11: *Write a composition in which a choice is made and reasons that would convince a specified audience are presented.

Grade 9

Objective 1: Recognize the correct spelling of commonly used words.

Objective 2: Demonstrate knowledge of standard punctuation.

Objective 3: Demonstrate knowledge of standard uses of capitalization.

Objective 4: Demonstrate knowledge of correct English usage.

Objective 5: Demonstrate the ability to distinguish complete sentences from fragments and/or run-ons.

Objective 6: Demonstrate the ability to proofread a written statement.

*In each grade, only one objective in the set of starred objectives will be measured each year.

Objective 7: *Write a composition to describe an object or picture.

Objective 8: *Write a composition to tell how to do something.

Objective 9: *Write a composition in which two or more ideas/objects/places are classified according to specified criteria and described.

Objective 10: *Write a composition in which a choice is made and reasons that would convince a specified audience are presented.

Objective 11: *Write a composition which discusses two opposing courses of action and is designed to convince a specified audience to follow one of those courses.

*In each grade, only one objective in the set of starred objectives will be measured each year.

Grade 3 Writing

General Specifications

I. Test Questions/Items

A. Sentences used in the test will be developed using only those words contained in the Texas Education Agency (TEA) cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 3. Proper nouns and words explained in the text are excluded from this requirement.

B. Sentences will be of varying lengths and shall not exceed 12 words in length.

C. Only simple sentences will be used.

D. Sentences will have content that is appropriate to the interests and experiences of third grade students.

E. Sentences shall represent various ethnic groups of populations in the state of Texas. The three main groups are black, Hispanic, and white.

F. The sentences and items shall be free of stereotyping by age, sex, ethnicity, and geographical location.

II. Answer Choices

A. For each item, there shall be four responses with only one correct response.

B. Neither "none of the above" nor "all of the above" shall be used as an answer choice.

C. Except where noted otherwise, all words in the items, including the answer choices, will be taken from the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 3 Proper nouns and words explained in the text are excluded from this requirement.

III. Test Package Format

A. Sufficient white space shall be included on each page.

B. Test questions and their corresponding answer choices shall appear on the same page.

C. Graphic displays and their corresponding items shall appear on the same or facing pages.

D. Type size shall be appropriate for third grade students.

Grade 3 Writing

Objectives and Measurement Specifications

Objective 1
Recognize the correct spelling of commonly used words.

Description of Test Questions

1. The question will consist of a sentence with the word to be spelled missing.
2. The word to be spelled will exhibit regular sound-symbol correspondence.
3. The state-adopted spellers will be the source of the word to be spelled, and only words designated in the TEA spelling list for Grade 3 will be eligible for testing. Neither contractions nor homonyms will be eligible for testing.

Description of Answer Choices

1. Three incorrectly spelled versions of the missing word will be presented as well as the correctly spelled version of the word.
2. Among the incorrect versions, the most common misspellings of the word that is tested shall be presented.

Example of Test Questions

Read the sentence. Find the right spelling of the word that goes in the blank. Mark your answer.

My bicycle is _____ and white.

- red
- rede
- redd
- rad

Objective 2
Demonstrate knowledge of standard punctuation.

Description of Test Items

1. Four different simple sentences will be presented. Only one sentence will be correctly punctuated.
2. The correct sentence will illustrate correct usage of one or more of the following:
   a. a period at the end of a declarative or imperative sentence
   b. a question mark at the end of an interrogative sentence
   c. a comma to separate the day and year in a date
3. The correct sentence shall contain no internal punctuation except when the day and year in a date is presented. In this case, a comma is used to separate the day and year in the date.
4. The incorrect sentences will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. a period or question mark omitted at the end of a sentence
   b. a period substituted for a question mark at the end of an interrogative sentence
   c. a comma omitted between the day and year in a date

Example of Test Questions
Read each sentence below. Find the sentence that has the right punctuation. Mark your answer.

⬭ I ate an egg for breakfast.

⬭ Where is your house

⬭ My sister was born on June 16 1980.

⬭ Please close the door

–3–

Objective 3
Demonstrate knowledge of standard uses of capitalization.

Description of Test Items

1. Four versions of the same simple sentence will be presented. Only one version will be capitalized correctly.
2. The correct version will illustrate correct capitalization of one or more of the following:
   a. the first word of a sentence
   b. the pronoun "I"
   c. a person's name
   d. the day of the week
3. Each incorrect answer choice will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. the first word of the sentence not capitalized
   b. the pronoun "I" not capitalized
   c. a person's name not capitalized
   d. the day of the week not capitalized
   e. unnecessary capitalization

Example of Test Questions
Read each sentence below. Find the sentence that has capital letters in the right places. Mark your answer.

⬭ I went with Sarah to her house.

⬭ i went with Sarah to her house.

⬭ I went with sarah to her house.

⬭ i went with sarah to her house.

Objective 4
Demonstrate knowledge of correct English usage.

Description of Test Items

1. Four versions of a simple sentence will be presented. Only one version will have a correct verb form.
2. Each version will contain a single main verb or a verb phrase consisting of a main verb and a present participle.
3. The verb conjugations that are used will be in the simple past, present, or future tense (e.g., "have," "had," "will have") or in the continuous present or past tense (e.g., "is running," "was running").
4. The correct answer will illustrate:
   a. correct subject-verb agreement among items containing neither compound elements nor phrases placed between the subject and verb of the sentence
   b. the correct form (conjugation and tense) for all regular and common irregular verbs.
5. Incorrect answers will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. incorrect conjugation
      (1) An irregular verb conjugated as if it were regular (e.g., "She losted her book yesterday.")
      (2) The verb "be" used as a main verb (e.g., "I be tired now.")
   b. lack of subject-verb agreement
      (1) A verb and its subject not agreeing in number (e.g., "The children was happy.")
      (2) A verb and its subject not agreeing in person (e.g., "You is my friend.")
   c. incorrect tense—a verb contradicting the time sense of the sentence (e.g., "Yesterday the dog goes away.")
6. Each answer choice will contain no more than one usage error.

Example of Test Questions
Read each sentence below. Find the sentence that uses words in the right way. Mark your answer.

⬭ Yesterday I ate two apples.

⬭ Yesterday I eats two apples.

⬭ Yesterday I eat two apples.

⬭ Yesterday I eated two apples.

–3–

Objective 5
Demonstrate the ability to distinguish complete sentences from fragments.

Description of Test Items

1. Four groups of words will be presented. Each group will begin with a capital letter and end with a period, but only one group will be a complete, simple sentence.
2. The correct answer will be the complete, simple sentence. This sentence will follow subject-verb-complement or subject-verb-modifier order.
3. Each incorrect answer will exemplify one of the following types of incomplete sentences:
   a. a word group with a subject but no predicate
   b. a word group with a predicate but no subject
   c. a prepositional phrase
4. No answer choice shall exceed seven words in length.

Example of Test Questions
Read each group of words. Find the complete sentence. Mark your answer.

⬭ Bonnie ran fast.

⬭ Next to the kitten.

⬭ A big red balloon.

⬭ Popped and ran.

Objective 6
Demonstrate the ability to proofread a written statement.

Description of Test Items

1. The question will consist of four sentences, each of which begins on a new line.
2. The four sentences together will comprise a description or a story.
3. Each line of text will not exceed 15 words in length.
4. Four parts of each sentence will be underlined. One of the four underlined parts will contain an error in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or usage. Only the errors defined in Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 are eligible for testing. The other three underlined parts will contain no mistakes.
5. An underlined part shall include one or more words and/or numbers.
6. Underlined parts occurring at the end of a sentence will extend beyond the end punctuation.
7. Underlined parts occurring in sentences may extend beyond the word to indicate that the punctuation mark or lack of punctuation shall be considered.
8. Whenever a date is tested, the entire date shall be underlined.

Example of Test Questions
Read each line below. In each line, one underlined part has a mistake in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or in the way a word is used. Find the underlined part that has the mistake and mark the space under the mistake.

1. My baby brother was born on November 29 1982.
2. he has blue eyes and dark brown hair.
3. He is learning how to walk and to says a lot of things.
4. He see me and tries to call my name.

—3—

Objective 7
Write a composition to describe an object or picture.

Description of Test Items

1. The stimulus shall elicit a composition which has an informative purpose and is written in the descriptive mode.
2. The item stimulus will ask the student to describe an object or what he or she sees in a picture that is given. Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the object or picture will be given in the item stimulus.
3. If a picture is given, it may present either a scene or a single object familiar to third graders. The picture may be fanciful or realistic and should be simple in nature. Visual cues shall be present to focus the student's attention on the picture to be described. No extraneous details shall be included in the picture.
4. If an object to be described is not pictured, the object must be very familiar to all third graders so that they will be able to write about it.
5. The vocabulary needed to describe the picture or object that is given shall not exceed that required of third graders, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 3.
6. The stimulus must appeal to the interests and experiences of third grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The composition will have an informative purpose and be written in a descriptive mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for third grade students.

1. The description should be specific and elaborated. The writer should describe a lengthy set of features elaborated through the use of figurative language and/or rich detail.
2. The description should paint a vivid picture of the object or scene in the mind of the reader by using picturesque words and/or sophisticated sentence constructions.
3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. Usually the writer will select one feature and describe it fully before moving on to another feature. Frequently, the writer will include the locations of features described and delineate the relationship of one feature to another.
4. The response remains on topic from beginning to end and does not digress into an expressive/narrative piece. The writer may frame the description with narration or interject expressive elements, but these enhance the description rather than detract from it.

Example of Test Questions

This is a picture of a circus dog. Look at this picture and describe what you see.

—3—

Objective 8
Write a composition to tell how to do something.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus shall elicit a composition that has an informative purpose and is written in the narrative mode.
2. The stimulus will ask the student to tell how to do something. Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the task shall be given in the stimulus.
3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will simply specify a process that is to be explained.
4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of a scene, a single object, or a series of pictures familiar to third grade students. The stimulus shall be simple, with no extraneous details given. Visual cues shall be given in the picture to focus the student's attention on the task.
5. If a specified process is to be explained, it must be very familiar to all third graders so that they will be able to write about it.
6. The vocabulary needed to describe the picture or process that is specified shall not exceed that required of third grade students, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 3.
7. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of third grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The composition will have an informative purpose and be written in the narrative mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for third grade students.

1. The composition should delineate the steps needed to complete the specified task and should sequentially order these steps.
2. Each step presented should be unambiguous, specific, and elaborated so that the step could be replicated by another individual.
3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. A logical sequence of steps will be presented. Usually the writer will describe each step fully before moving on to another step.

Example of Test Questions
Explain how to make a bed. Tell what you would do first. Then tell what other things you would do.

—3—

Objective 9
Write a narrative on a specified topic.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus shall elicit a composition that has an expressive purpose and is written in the narrative mode.
2. The stimulus will ask the student to write a story. Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the task shall be given in the stimulus.
3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will simply specify a story scenario.
4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of a scene or a single object, and it will be fanciful or realistic. The picture shall be simple; no extraneous details shall be included in the picture. The stimulus shall have visual cues that focus the student's attention on the task.
5. If a story scenario is presented, it must be very familiar to all third graders so that they will be able to respond to the task.
6. The vocabulary needed to write the story shall not exceed that required of third grade students as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 3.
7. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of third grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The composition will have an expressive purpose and be written in the narrative mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for third grade students. The response should include a series of events sequenced in logical narrative progression.

1. The story should follow the narrative progression from beginning to end. The writer does not make abrupt, confusing shifts in time or location. When shifts in time or location occur, the writer handles these in a clear effective manner.
2. The narrative should have a clear sense of beginning and ending. The writer does not stop writing abruptly but brings closure to the writing by resolving the action.
3. The response should include rich details and a varied choice of words. Description is vivid and extensive and helps the reader to visualize the events of the story. The details embellish the unfolding events.

Example of Test Questions
Pretend that you could spend a day with a famous person. Tell who that person is, and write a story about your adventures that day.

Grade 5 Writing

General Specifications

I. Test Questions/Items

A. Sentences used in the test will be developed using only those words contained in the Texas Education Agency (TEA) cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 5. Proper nouns and words explained in the text are excluded from this requirement.

B. Sentences will be of varying lengths and shall not exceed 15 words in length.

C. Sentences will be limited to simple, compound, and complex sentences.

D. Sentences will have content that is appropriate to the interests and experiences of fifth grade students.

E. Sentences shall represent various ethnic groups of populations in the state of Texas. The three main groups are black, Hispanic, and white.

F. The sentences and items shall be free of stereotyping by age, sex, ethnicity, and geographical location.

II. Answer Choices

A. For each item, there shall be four responses with only one correct response.

B. Neither "none of the above" nor "all of the above" shall be used as an answer choice.

C. Except where noted otherwise, all words in the items, including the answer choices, will be taken from the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 5. Proper nouns and words explained in the text are excluded from this requirement.

III. Test Package Format

A. The test shall be printed in black ink on white paper.

B. Graphic displays, their corresponding items, and response choices shall appear on the same or facing pages.

C. Type size shall be appropriate for fifth grade students.

Grade 5 Writing

Objectives and Measurement Specifications

Objective 1
Recognize the correct spelling of commonly used words.

Description of Test Questions

1. Each question will consist of a sentence with the word to be spelled missing.
2. The state-adopted spellers will be the source for the words to be spelled, and only words designated in the TEA spelling list for Grade 5 will be eligible for testing. Neither contractions nor homonyms will be eligible for testing.

Description of Answer Choices

1. Three incorrectly spelled versions of the missing word will be presented as well as the correctly spelled version of the word.
2. Among the incorrect answers, the most common misspellings of the word to be tested shall be presented.

Example of Test Questions
Choose the correct spelling of the word that goes in the blank.

The birthday party was a _____ .

A surprise

B suprize

C suprise

D surpprise

Objective 2
Demonstrate knowledge of standard punctuation.

Description of Test Items

1. Four different sentences will be presented. Only one sentence will be correctly punctuated.
2. The correct sentence will illustrate correct usage of one or more of the following:
   a. a period at the end of declarative or imperative sentences
   b. a question mark at the end of an interrogative sentence
   c. a comma between city and state and between words in a series*
   d. an apostrophe in contractions made with "not" or "will"
3. The correct sentence should have no internal punctuation except when it contains contractions, words in a series, or a reference to a city and state.
4. The incorrect sentences will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. omitting punctuation at the end of a declarative or imperative sentence
   b. substituting a period for a question mark at the end of an interrogative sentence
   c. omitting a comma between city and state or between words in a series*
   d. misplacing or not using an apostrophe in contractions made with "not" or "will"
   e. using unnecessary commas (e.g., placing a comma between the subject and verb of a sentence)

* Students will not be tested on the use of the comma before "and" in a series.

Example of Test Questions
Choose the sentence that has the correct punctuation.

A Laura was born on June 16, 1964.

B He likes fried chicken mashed potatoes, and iced tea.

C Where are the cold sandwiches

D Tommy isnt going with us.

Objective 3
Demonstrate knowledge of standard uses of capitalization.

Description of Test Items

1. Four versions of the same sentence will be presented. Only one version will be capitalized correctly.
2. The correct version will illustrate correct capitalization of one or more of the following:
   a. the first word in a sentence
   b. the pronoun "I"
   c. names of persons
   d. days of the week
   e. cities and states
   f. holidays
   g. months of the year
3. The incorrect versions will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. not capitalizing the first word in a sentence
   b. not capitalizing the pronoun "I"
   c. not capitalizing a person's name
   d. not capitalizing holidays, days of the week, months of the year, or the names of cities and states
   e. unnecessary capitalization.

Example of Test Questions
Choose the sentence that has the correct capitalization.

A Every year the baseball season begins in April.

B Every year the Baseball season begins in april.

C every year the baseball season begins in April.

D every year the baseball season begins in april.

Objective 4
Demonstrate knowledge of correct English usage.

Description of Test Items

1. Four versions of the same sentence will be presented. Only one version will demonstrate correct English usage.
2. Each version will contain a single main verb or a verb phrase consisting of an auxiliary verb and a participle.
3. The verb conjugations that are used will be in the past, present, or future tense (e.g., "have," "had," "will have") or in the continuous present or past tense (e.g., "is running," "was running").
4. Each answer choice will contain no more than one usage error.
5. The correct answer will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. correct subject-verb agreement among items containing neither compound elements nor phrases placed between the subject and verb of the sentence
   b. correct form of all regular verbs, common irregular verbs, and the verb "to be"
   c. correct comparative forms of adjectives
   d. correct word choice
   e. avoidance of double negatives (The use of "scarcely" and "hardly" will not be tested.)
   f. correct forms of "a" and "an"
6. The incorrect answer choices will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. incorrect conjugation
      (1) An irregular verb is conjugated as if it were regular (e.g., "Last week they leaved me some books to read.")
      (2) The verb "be" is used as a main verb (e.g., "At dinner time he be very hungry.")
   b. lack of subject-verb agreement
      (1) A verb and its subject do not agree in person (e.g., "The men was tired after a long day.")
      (2) A verb and its subject do not agree in number (e.g., "He don't like the seashore.")
   c. incorrect comparative forms of adjectives
      (1) The comparative form involves a double comparison (e.g., "He is more happier than John.")
      (2) A multi-syllable adjective comparative form is made by adding "er" (e.g., "That watch is expensiver than mine.")
   d. incorrect word choice (e.g., "The teacher learned me how to spell.")
   e. use of double negatives (e.g., "I didn't do nothing wrong.")
   f. incorrect use of "a" and "an"

Example of Test Questions
Choose the sentence that is written correctly.

A Last week they left me some books to read.

B Last week they leave me some books to read.

C Last week they leaved me some books to read.

D Last week they leaving me some books to read.

—5—

Objective 5
Demonstrate the ability to distinguish complete sentences from fragments and/or run-ons.

Description of Test Items

1. Four groups of words will be presented. Each group will begin with a capital letter and end with a period. One group will be a complete simple sentence. The other three groups will be fragments or run-on sentences.
2. The correct answer will be the complete simple sentence. This sentence will follow normal sentence order (subject-verb-complement or subject-verb-modifier).
3. Each incorrect answer will exemplify one of the following types of incomplete sentences or run-ons:
   a. a word group with a subject but no predicate
   b. a word group with a predicate but no subject
   c. a prepositional phrase
   d. two short, independent clauses with no period or no conjunction between the two
   e. a participial phrase

Example of Test Questions
Find the group of words that is one complete sentence.

A The boat almost tipped over.

B The boat on shining blue waters.

C Has sailed across the lake.

D Until the wind blew it into a rock.

—5—

Objective 6
Demonstrate the ability to proofread a written statement.

Description of Test Items

1. The question will consist of four lines of text. After the first sentence, no more than one sentence shall begin on a new line.
2. The four lines of text will comprise a story or a description.
3. Each line of text will not exceed 15 words in length.
4. Four parts of each line of text will be underlined. One of the four parts will contain an error in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or usage. Only the errors defined in Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 are eligible for testing. The other three underlined parts will contain no mistakes.
5. An underlined part shall include one or more words and/or numbers.
6. Underlined parts occurring at the end of a sentence will extend beyond the end punctuation.
7. Underlined parts occurring in sentences may extend beyond the word to indicate that the punctuation mark or lack of punctuation shall be considered.
8. Whenever a date is tested, the entire date will be underlined.
9. Whenever a city and state are tested together, the entire group of words will be underlined.

Example of Test Questions
Read each line below. In each line, there is a mistake in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or in the way a word is used. Find the underlined part of each line that has the mistake. On your answer sheet mark the letter under the part you choose.

In the heart of the hill country is Austin, the capital of texas. Many
A B C D

people travel to see the butiful city. They often go
A B C D

to Lake Travis for their vacations. On a summer days
A B C D

the lake is filled, with swimmers and sailboats.
A B C D

—5—

Objective 7
Write a composition to describe an object or picture.

Description of Test Items

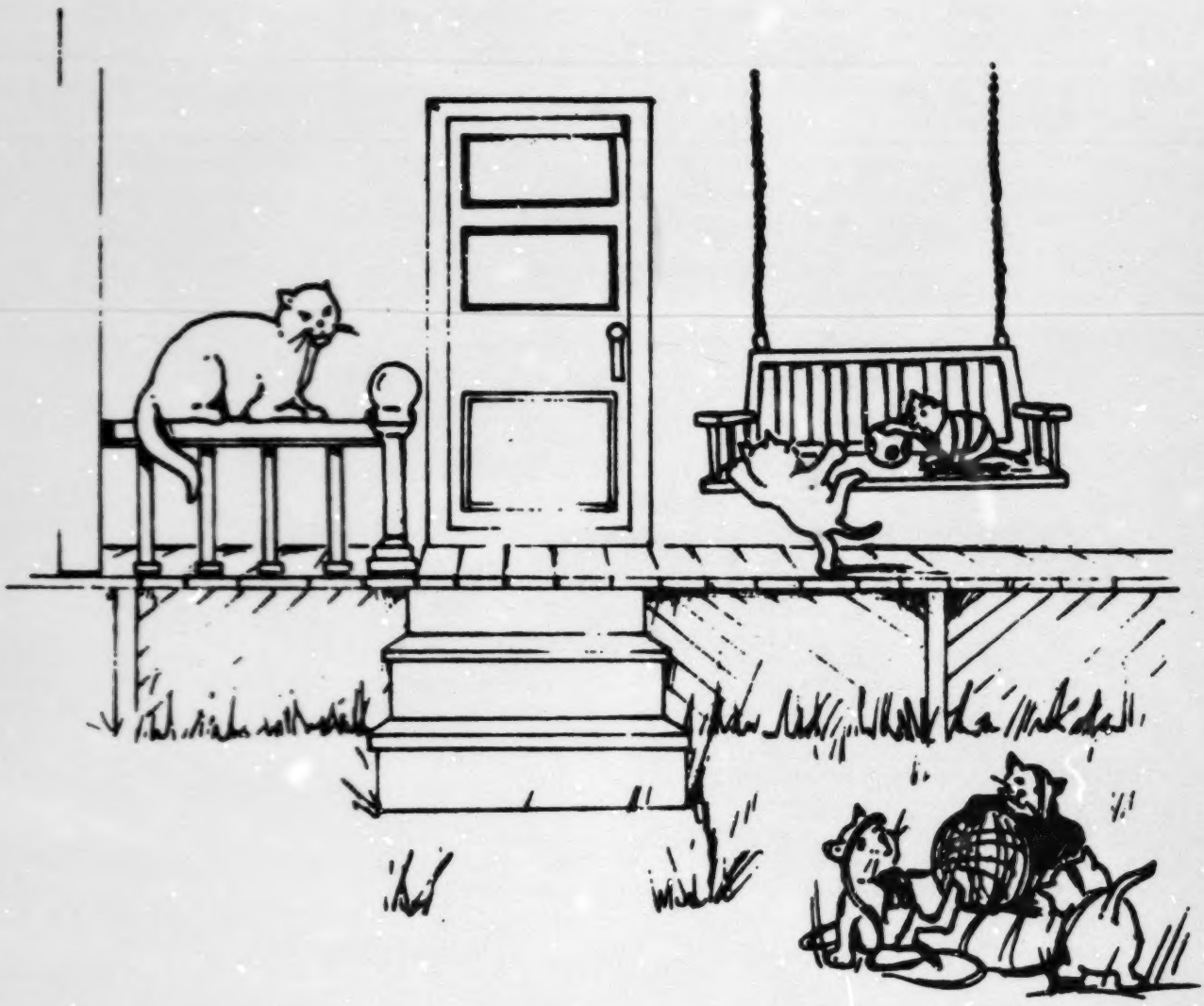
1. The stimulus will elicit a composition that has an informative purpose and is written in the descriptive mode.
2. The stimulus will ask the student to describe an object or what he or she sees in a picture that is given. The specified audience will be the teacher, a classmate, or "someone else." Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the object or picture will be given in the stimulus.
3. If a picture is given, it will consist of either a scene or a single object familiar to fifth graders. The picture will be fanciful or realistic and must be relatively simple. Visual cues shall be present that focus the student's attention on the task. No extraneous details shall be included in the picture.
4. If an object to be described is not pictured, the object must be very familiar to all fifth grade students so that they can write about it.
5. The vocabulary needed to describe the picture or object that is given shall not exceed that required of fifth graders, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 5.
6. The stimulus must appeal to the interests and experiences of fifth grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The composition will have an informative purpose, be written in a descriptive mode, and respond in a manner appropriate to the specified audience. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for fifth grade students.

1. The description should be specific and elaborated. The writer should describe a lengthy set of features elaborated through the use of figurative language and/or rich detail.
2. The description should paint a vivid picture of the object or scene in the mind of the reader by using picturesque words and/or sophisticated sentence constructions.
3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. Usually the writer will select one feature and describe it fully before moving on to another feature. Frequently, the writer will include the locations of features described and delineate the relationship of one feature to another.
4. The response remains on topic from beginning to end and does not digress into an expressive/narrative piece. The writer may frame the description with narration or interject expressive elements, but these enhance the description rather than detract from it.

Example of Test Questions

Kittens can be fun to watch. Look at this picture and describe what you see for someone else to read.



—5—

Objective 8
Write a composition to tell how to do something.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has an informative purpose and is written in the narrative mode.
2. The stimulus will ask the student to tell how to do something. The specified audience will be the teacher, a classmate, or "someone else." Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the task will be given in the question.
3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will specify a process that is to be explained.
4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of a scene, a single object, or a series of pictures familiar to fifth graders. The stimulus shall be relatively simple in nature; no extraneous details shall be included. Visual cues shall be given in the picture to focus the student's attention on the task.
5. If a specified process is to be explained, the process must be very familiar to all fifth graders so that they will be able to write about it.
6. The vocabulary needed to describe the picture or process that is specified shall not exceed that required of fifth grade students, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 5.
7. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of fifth grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The composition will have an informative purpose and be written in the narrative mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for fifth grade students.

1. The composition should delineate the steps needed to complete the specified task and should sequentially order these steps.
2. Each step presented should be unambiguous, specific, and elaborated so that the step could be replicated by another individual.
3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. A logical sequence of steps will be presented. Usually the writer will describe each step fully before moving on to another step.

Example of Test Questions
Explain to your classmates how to make your favorite sandwich. Tell what you would do first. Then tell what other things you would do.

Objective 9
Write a narrative on a specified topic.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus shall elicit a composition that has an expressive purpose and is written in the narrative mode.
2. The stimulus will ask the student to write a story. The specified audience will be the teacher, a classmate, or "someone else." Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the task shall be given in the stimulus.
3. The item will include a picture, or it will simply specify a story scenario.
4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of a scene or a single object, and it will be fanciful or realistic. It shall be relatively simple; no extraneous details shall be included. The stimulus shall have visual cues that focus the student's attention on the task.
5. If a story scenario is presented, it must be familiar to all fifth graders so that they will be able to respond to the task.
6. The vocabulary needed to write the story shall not exceed that required of fifth graders, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 5.
7. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of fifth grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The composition will have an expressive purpose, be written in the narrative mode, and respond appropriately to the specified audience. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for fifth grade students. The response should include a series of events sequenced in logical narrative progression.

1. The story should follow the narrative progression from beginning to end. The writer does not make abrupt, confusing shifts in time or location. When shifts in time or location occur, the writer handles these in a clear effective manner.
2. The narrative should have a clear sense of beginning and ending. The writer does not stop writing abruptly but brings closure to the writing by resolving the action.
3. The response should include rich details and a varied choice of words. Description is vivid and extensive and helps the reader to visualize the events of the story. The details embellish the unfolding events.

Example of Test Questions
Pretend that a puppy followed you home from school one day. Write a story for your classmates about your adventures that day.

Objective 10
Write a composition in which two or more ideas/objects/places are classifed according to specified criteria and described.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has an informative purpose and is written in the classificatory mode.
2. The stimulus will ask the student to classify two or more ideas/objects/places. Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the task will be given in the stimulus. The specified audience will be the teacher, a classmate, or "someone else."
3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will simply specify the ideas/objects/places to be discussed.
4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of a series of pictures that are familiar to fifth graders and are relatively simple in nature. No extraneous details shall be included in the stimulus. Visual cues that focus the student's attention on the task shall be given.
5. If ideas/objects/places are described in the question, they shall be very familiar to all fifth grade students so that they can write about them.
6. The vocabulary needed to write the composition shall not exceed that required of fifth grade students, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 5.
7. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of fifth grade students.

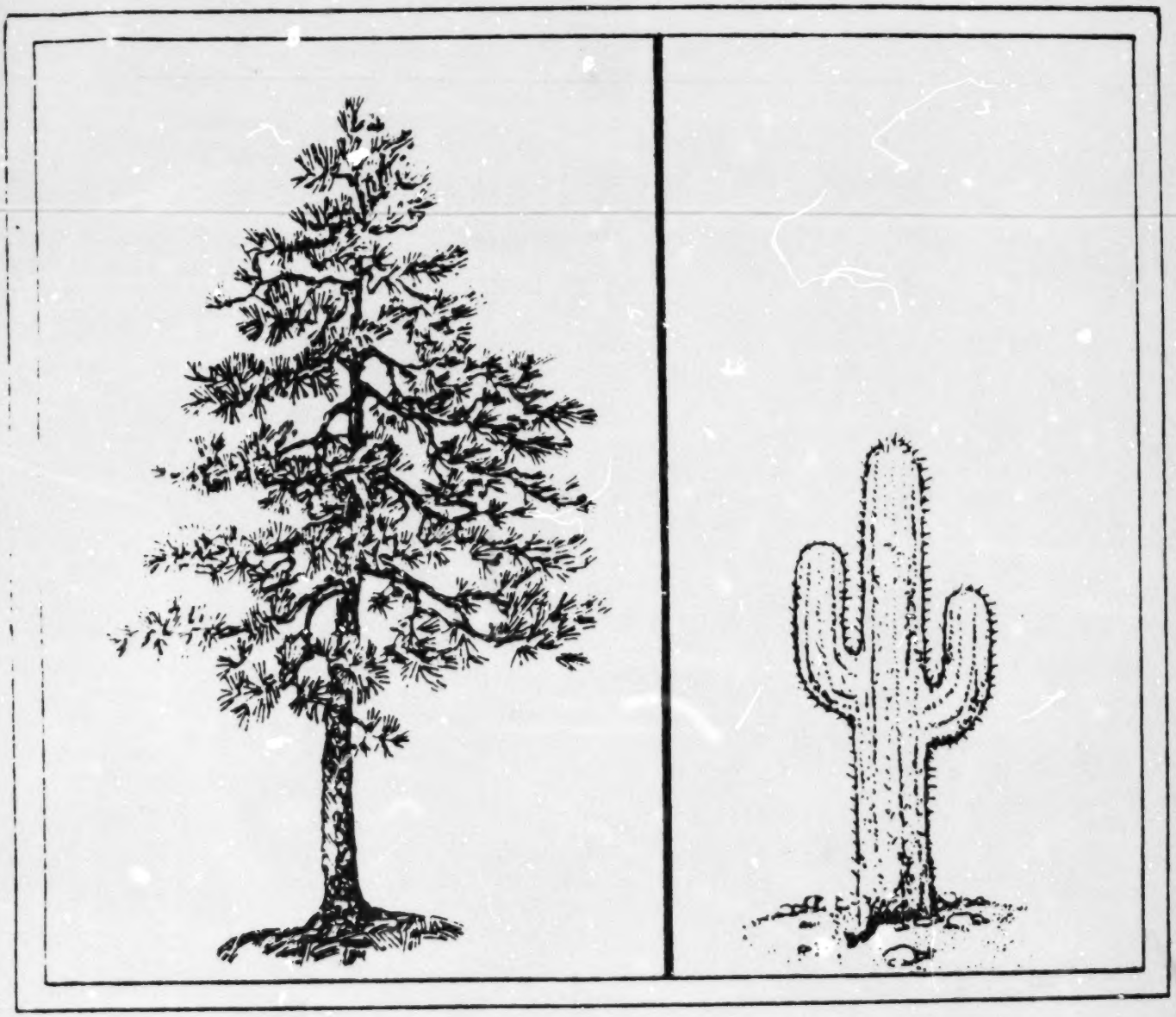
Description of Successful Responses
The response will have an informative purpose and be written in the classificatory mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for fifth grade students.

1. In the composition the specified ideas/objects/places should be classified in a logical way in response to the specified audience.
2. Information presented about the specified ideas/objects/places should be specific and elaborated.
3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. Relationships between the ideas delineated should be clear.
4. The response remains on topic from beginning to end. When personal anecdotes or other rhetorical devices are used, they enhance the response.

Example of Test Questions

Look at the pine tree and cactus shown below. Think about them. In what ways are they alike? In what ways are they different?

Write a report for your class about how a pine tree and a cactus are alike and how they are different.



Objective II
Write a composition in which a choice is made and reasons that would convince a specified audience are presented.

Description of Test Items

1. The stimulus will ask the student to make a choice and present convincing reasons for the choice to a specified audience. The specified audience will be the teacher, the principal, a classmate, or "someone else." Verbal cues will be given in the item to focus the student's attention on the task.
2. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has a persuasive purpose and is written in a descriptive mode.
3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will simply specify options among which a choice must be made.
4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of either a scene or a single object familiar to fifth graders. The picture will be relatively simple; no extraneous details will be included. Visual cues will be presented to focus the student's attention on the task.
5. If the options among which a choice must be made are described in the question, the options must be very familiar to all fifth graders so that they can write about them.
6. The vocabulary needed to write the composition shall not exceed that required of fifth grade students, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 5.
7. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of fifth grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The response will have a persuasive purpose and be written in the descriptive mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for fifth grade students. In the composition, the student will make a choice among the options presented and will provide reasons for the choice that are presented in a logical, unified way and are convincing to a specified audience.

1. The response should contain sufficient elaboration of reasons to make them understood clearly and to be convincing in support of the writer's stated choice.
2. The response should contain a clear sense of order and completeness as evidenced by effective use of transitional, introductory, and concluding elements.
3. The response should contain highly effective word choice, such as striking words, phrases, or expressions of thought.
4. The response should be characterized by an overall fluency in the expression of ideas.

Example of Test Questions
Your class has earned money to buy something for your classroom. The choices are an aquarium, a computer, sports equipment, or art supplies. Choose <u>one</u> of these. Write a letter to your teacher and give reasons for your choice.

Grade 9 Writing

General Specifications

I. Test Questions/Items

A. Sentences used in the test will be developed using only those words contained in the Texas Education Agency (TEA) cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 9. Proper nouns and words explained in the text are excluded from this requirement.

B. Sentences will be of varying lengths and shall not exceed 18 words in length.

C. Simple, compound, and complex sentences will be used.

D. Sentences will have content that is appropriate to the interests and experiences of ninth grade students.

E. Sentences shall represent various ethnic groups of populations in the state of Texas. The three main groups are black, Hispanic, and white.

F. The sentences and items shall be free of stereotyping by age, sex, ethnicity, and geographical location.

II. Answer Choices

A. For each item, there shall be four responses with only one correct response.

B. Except where noted otherwise, all words in the items, including the answer choices, will be taken from the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 9. Proper nouns and words explained in the text are excluded from this requirement.

III. Test Package Format

A. The test shall be printed in black ink on white paper.

B. Graphic displays, their corresponding items, and response choices shall appear on the same or facing pages.

C. Type size shall be appropriate for ninth grade students.

Grade 9 Writing

Objectives and Measurement Specifications

Objective 1
Recognize the correct spelling of commonly used words.

Description of Test Questions

1. The question will consist of a sentence with the word to be spelled missing.
2. The eligible spelling words will be those that appear on the TEA spelling list for Grade 9. Neither contractions nor homonyms will be eligible for testing.

Description of Answer Choices

1. Three incorrectly spelled versions of the missing word will be presented as well as the correctly spelled version of the word.
2. Among incorrect answers, the most common misspellings of the word to be tested will be presented.

Example of Test Questions
Choose the correct spelling of the word that goes in the blank.

Patti sprinkled _____ on the rolls before she baked them.

A cinnamon

B cinamon

C cinammon

D sinamon

Objective 2
Demonstrate knowledge of standard punctuation.

Description of Test Items

1. Four different sentences will be presented.* Only one sentence will be correctly punctuated.
2. The correct sentence will illustrate the correct usage of one or more of the following:
   a. a period after abbreviations and at the end of declarative and imperative statements
   b. a question mark at the end of an interrogative sentence
   c. a comma between city and state, between words in a series**, in the salutation of a friendly letter, in the closing of a letter, or in setting off a noun of direct address
   d. an apostrophe in contractions and in singular possessives
3. Incorrect answer choices will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. omitting punctuation at the end of a sentence
   b. substituting a period for a question mark at the end of an interrogative sentence
   c. omitting a comma between city and state, between words in a series**, in the salutation of a friendly letter, in the closing of a letter, or in setting off a noun of direct address
   d. omitting or misplacing an apostrophe in singular possessives and in contractions
   e. using unnecessary commas (e.g., between the subject and verb of a sentence)
   f. using unnecessary apostrophes (e.g., in possessive pronouns)

*Except for measuring correct usage in a salutation and closing of a friendly letter.
**Students will not be tested on the use of the comma before "and" in a series.

Example of Test Questions
Choose the sentence that has the correct punctuation.

A Didn't you understand the answer to the subtraction problem?

B David likes eggs bacon, and pancakes for breakfast

C Is it supposed to rain on Sunday.

D Ann please sit down so that the person behind you can see the play.

—9—

Objective 3
Demonstrate knowledge of standard uses of capitalization.

Description of Test Items

1. Four different sentences will be presented. Only one sentence will be correctly capitalized.
2. The correct sentence will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. capitalization of the first word in a sentence
   b. capitalization of the pronoun "I"
   c. capitalization of the names of persons
   d. capitalization of the names of nationalities and languages
   e. capitalization of the days of the week
   f. capitalization of the months of the year
   g. capitalization of cities, states, countries, and particular places
   h. capitalization of the titles of persons (limited to Dr., Mr., Mrs., and Ms.)
   i. capitalization of the names of holidays
   j. capitalization of the appropriate parts of a letter
   k. avoidance of unnecessary capitalization
3. Incorrect sentences will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. not capitalizing the first word in a sentence
   b. not capitalizing the pronoun "I"
   c. not capitalizing a person's name
   d. not capitalizing the names of holidays, days of the week, months of the year, cities, states, countries, particular places, the names of nationalities and languages, or the titles of persons
   e. not capitalizing appropriate parts of a letter
   f. including unnecessary capitalization

Example of Test Questions
Choose the sentence that has the correct capitalization.

A Our teacher asked Dr. Moore to explain the dangers of drugs.

B We visited mexico city for several days before going back to Austin.

C Labor day occurs in the Fall of the year.

D We have russian friends who used to live in the soviet Union.

Objective 4
Demonstrate knowledge of correct English usage.

Description of Test Items

1. Four differenct sentences will be presented. Only one sentence will illustrate correct usage.
2. The verb conjugations that are used in the answer choices will be in the past, present, present perfect, past perfect, or future tense or in the continuous present or past tense (e.g., "is running," "was running").
3. Each answer choice will contain no more than one usage error.
4. The correct answer choices will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. correct subject-verb agreement in person and number with only minimal interruption between subject and verb
   b. correct form for all regular and common irregular verbs
   c. correct nominative forms of pronouns as subjects
   d. correct comparative and superlative forms of adjectives
   e. correct word choice
   f. avoidance of double negatives (The use of "scarcely" and "hardly" will not be tested.)
5. Incorrect answer choices will illustrate one or more of the following:
   a. incorrect conjugation
      (1) An irregular verb is conjugated as if it were regular (e.g., "Yesterday I writed a letter to my aunt.")
      (2) The past tense is used as a past participle in a compound verb (e.g., "Phil is tired because he had ran for a long time.")
   b. lack of subject-verb agreement
      (1) A verb and its subject do not agree in number (e.g., "Her parents was members of that club.")
      (2) A verb and its subject do not agree in person (e.g., "He don't answer the telephone very often.")
   c. use of double negatives (e.g., "I don't never go shopping.")
   d. not using the nominative form as a subject—the objective form of the pronoun is used as a subject (e.g., "Me and Johnny went to the show.")
   e. incorrect comparative and superlative forms of adjectives
      (1) The comparative form shows a double comparison (e.g., "This is the more better of the two books.")
      (2) A multi-syllable adjective comparative form is made by adding "er" (e.g., "On that day the sunrise was beautifuller than the sunset.")
   f. incorrect use of homonyms or word choice
      (1) The wrong homonym is used in the sentence (e.g., "The corn was waste high.")
      (2) The wrong word is used in the sentence (e.g., "Do not leave the door slam shut.")

Example of Test Questions
Choose the sentence that is written correctly. Capitalization, punctuation, and spelling are correct in all sentences.

A My cousin went to New Orleans to see the World's Fair.

B Him and I are working together on the science fair project.

C She don't know how to get to the party.

D This morning I runned all the way around the lake.

—9—

Objective 5
Demonstrate the ability to distinguish complete sentences from fragments and/or run-ons.

Description of Test Items

1. Four groups of words will be presented. Each group will begin with a capital letter and end with a period. One group will be a complete simple, compound, or complex sentence.
2. The correct answer will be the complete sentence. This sentence will follow normal sentence order (e.g., subject-verb-complement or subject-verb-modifier). Fragments will consist of brief phrases or word groups. Run-ons will consist of two independent clauses written as a single sentence.
3. Each incorrect answer will exemplify one of the following types of incomplete sentences:
   a. a word group with a subject but no predicate
   b. a word group with a predicate but no subject
   c. one or more prepositional phrases
   d. one or more participial phrases and/or dependent clauses
   e. two independent clauses with no period between the two
   f. two independent clauses with a comma between the two
   g. a subordinate clause

Example of Test Questions
Find the one choice in each group of words that is a complete sentence (not a sentence fragment or a run-on sentence).

A The sailboat race will begin tomorrow at noon.

B All the way up the mountain and back.

C Arrived at the airport during the storm.

D Trying to get to the lake before the traffic becomes heavy.

—9—

Objective 6
Demonstrate the ability to proofread a written statement.

Description of Test Items

1. The question will consist of four lines of text. Following each line will be a response choice labeled "no mistake." After the first sentence, no more than one sentence shall begin on a new line.
2. The four lines of text will comprise a story or a description.
3. Each line of text will not exceed 15 words in length.
4. Three parts of each line of text will be underlined. One part may contain an error in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or usage. Only the errors defined in Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 are eligible for testing. If one underlined part contains a mistake, the other two underlined parts shall contain no mistakes.
5. An underlined part shall include one or more words and/or numbers.
6. Underlined parts occurring at the end of a sentence will extend beyond the end punctuation.
7. Underlined parts occurring in sentences may extend beyond the word to indicate that the punctuation mark or lack of punctuation shall be considered.
8. Whenever a date is tested, the entire date will be underlined.
9. Whenever a city and state are tested together, the entire group of words will be underlined.
10. Whenever a particular place is tested, the entire group of words will be underlined.
11. Whenever the title of a person is tested, the person's full name and title will be underlined.

Example of Test Questions
On each line of the passage, look for a mistake in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or in the way a word is used. If you find a mistake in an underlined part, mark the letter under this part on your answer sheet. If you don't find a mistake, mark answer choice D on your answer sheet.

The sport of windsurfing <u>becomes</u>	<u>popular</u>	only <u>recently.</u> Windsurfing is		<u>No Mistake</u>
A	B	C		D
popular among <u>people</u> who <u>lives</u>	along the Atlantic and Pacific <u>coasts.</u> A			<u>No Mistake</u>
A	B		C	D
windsurfer <u>cansists</u> of a fiberglass <u>board and</u>	a sail mounted on a <u>pole</u>	or mast.		<u>No Mistake</u>
A	B	C		D
<u>To use</u> a windsurfer, hop on <u>board</u>	get the wind behind <u>you,</u>	and sail away.		<u>No Mistake</u>
A	B	C		D

—9—

Objective 7
Write a composition to describe an object or picture.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has an informative purpose and is written in the descriptive mode.
2. The stimulus will ask the student to describe an object or what he or she sees in a picture that is given. The specified audience will be appropriate school personnel, other adults, a classmate, "someone else," or a friend. Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the object or picture will be given in the stimulus.
3. If a picture is given, it will consist of either a scene or a single object familiar to ninth graders. The picture will be fanciful or realistic and must be relatively simple. Visual cues shall be present that focus the student's attention on the task. No extraneous details shall be included in the picture.
4. If an object to be described is not pictured, the object must be very familiar to all ninth grade students so that they can write about it.
5. The vocabulary needed to describe the picture or object that is given shall not exceed that required of ninth graders, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 9.
6. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of ninth grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The composition will have an informative purpose, be written in a descriptive mode, and respond in a manner appropriate to the specified audience. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for ninth grade students.

1. The description should be specific and elaborated. The writer should describe a lengthy set of features elaborated through the use of figurative language and/or rich detail.
2. The description should paint a vivid picture of the object or scene in the mind of the reader by using picturesque words and/or sophisticated sentence constructions.
3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. Usually the writer will select one feature and describe it fully before moving on to another feature. Frequently, the writer will include the locations of features described and delineate the relationship of one feature to another.
4. The response remains on topic from beginning to end and does not digress into an expressive/narrative piece. The writer may frame the description with narration or interject expressive elements, but these enhance the description rather than detract from it.

Example of Test Questions
Pick one of the following foods and describe it for someone who has never eaten this food. The foods from which to choose are hamburger, spaghetti, steak, enchiladas, liver, mashed potatoes, and popcorn.

—9—

Objective 8
Write a composition to tell how to do something.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has an informative purpose and is written in the narrative mode.
2. The stimulus will ask the student to tell how to do something. The specified audience will be appropriate school personnel, other adults, a classmate, "someone else," or a friend. Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the task will be given in the picture.
3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will specify a process that is to be explained.
4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of a scene, a single object, or a series of pictures familiar to ninth graders. Visual cues shall be given in the picture to focus the student's attention on the task.
5. If a specified process is to be explained, the process must be very familiar to all ninth graders so that they will be able to write about it.
6. The vocabulary needed to describe the picture or process that is specified shall not exceed that required of ninth grade students, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 9.
7. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of ninth grade students.

Description of Successful Responses

The composition will have an informative purpose and be written in the narrative mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for ninth grade students.

1. The composition should delineate the steps needed to complete the specified task and should sequentially order these steps.
2. Each step presented should be unambiguous, specific, and elaborated so that the step could be replicated by another individual.
3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. A logical sequence of steps will be presented. Usually the writer will describe each step fully before moving on to another step.

Example of Test Questions

Explain to a friend how you would apply for a summer job at a place you would like to work. Tell what you would do first, and then tell what other things you would do.

—9—

Objective 9
Write a composition in which two or more ideas/objects/places are classified according to specified criteria and described.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has an informative purpose and is written in the classificatory mode.
2. The stimulus will ask the student to classify two or more ideas/objects/places. Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the task will be given in the stimulus. The specified audience will be appropriate school personnel, other adults, a classmate, "someone else," or a friend.
3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will simply specify the ideas/objects/places to be discussed.
4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of a series of pictures of objects/places that are to be classified. These objects/places shall be familiar to ninth graders. Visual cues that focus the student's attention on the task shall be given.
5. If ideas/objects/places are simply described in the question, they shall be very familiar to all ninth grade students so that they can write about them.
6. The vocabulary needed to write the composition shall not exceed that required of ninth grade students, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 9.
7. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of ninth grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The response will have an informative purpose and be written in the classificatory mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for ninth grade students.

1. In the composition the specified ideas/objects/places should be classified in a logical way in response to the specified audience.
2. Information presented about the specified ideas/objects/places should be specific and elaborated.
3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. Relationships between the ideas delineated should be clear.
4. The response remains on topic from beginning to end. When personal anecdotes or other rhetorical devices are used, they enhance the response.

Example of Test Questions
Your principal is thinking about starting a program in which students at your school would help elementary school children with their schoolwork one day a week after school. Write a letter to your principal in which you state advantages and disadvantages of such a program.

—9—

Objective 10
Write a composition in which a choice is made and reasons that would convince a specified audience are presented.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has a persuasive purpose and is written in a descriptive mode.
2. The stimulus will ask the student to make a choice and present convincing reasons for the choice to a specified audience. The specified audience will be appropriate school personnel, other adults, a classmate, "someone else," or a friend. Verbal cues will be given in the item to focus the student's attention on the task.
3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will simply specify options among which a choice must be made.
4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of either a scene, a single object, or a series of pictures familiar to ninth graders. Visual cues will be presented to focus the student's attention on the task.
5. If the options among which a choice must be made are simply described in a question, the options must be very familiar to all ninth graders so that they can write about them.
6. The vocabulary needed to write the composition shall not exceed that required of ninth grade students, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list for Grade 9.
7. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of ninth grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The response will have a persuasive purpose and be written in the descriptive mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for ninth grade students. In the composition, the student will make a choice among the options presented and will provide reasons for the choice that are presented in a logical, unified way and are convincing to a specified audience.

1. The response should contain sufficient elaboration of reasons to make them understood clearly and to be convincing in support of the writer's stated choice.
2. The response should contain a clear sense of order and completeness as evidenced by effective use of transitional, introductory, and concluding elements.
3. The response should contain highly effective word choice, such as striking words, phrases, or expressions of thought.
4. The response should be characterized by an overall fluency in the expression of ideas.

Example of Test Questions
Your school has just received a sum of money from an unnamed donor. The school board has decided that the money should be spent to build either a new gymnasium, a new library, or a new science laboratory. Which one of these buildings do you think should be built? Write a letter to school board members and present reasons to convince them of your choice.

—9—

Objective II
Write a composition which discusses two opposing courses of action and is designed to convince a specified audience to follow one of the those courses.

Description of Test Items

1. The stimulus will elicit a composition that has a persuasive purpose and is written in the classificatory mode.
2. The item will ask the student to discuss two opposing courses of action and to convince a specified audience to follow one of these courses. The specified audience will be appropriate school personnel, other adults, a classmate, "someone else," or a friend. Verbal cues will be given in the stimulus to focus the student's attention on the task.
3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will simply specify the opposing courses of action to be discussed.
4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of a scene, a single object, or a series of pictures that are familiar to ninth graders. Visual cues shall be presented that focus the student's attention on the task.
5. The vocabulary needed to write the composition shall not exceed that required of ninth grade students, as defined by the TEA vocabulary list for Grade 9.
6. The stimulus shall appeal to the interests and experiences of ninth grade students.

Description of Successful Responses
The response will have a persuasive purpose and be written in a classificatory mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for ninth grade students.

1. In the response two alternate courses of action should be discussed and convincing reasons should be presented to a specific audience for choosing one of these courses of action.
2. Information presented about the two courses of action should be specific and elaborated.
3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. Relationships between the ideas delineated should be clear and the persuasive tone of response should be apparent.

Example of Test Questions
Your local airport has become too crowded. The airport, which is very close to the city, can be remodeled to meet minimum safety standards, or a new airport can be built 10 miles from town. This new airport would be larger and safer than the present airport. Discuss both courses of action, choose a position, and convince the mayor that your position is correct.

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; TITLE IX, 1973 EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; AND VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED IN 1974.

It is the policy of the Texas Education Agency to comply fully with the nondiscrimination provisions of all federal and state laws and regulations by assuring that no person shall be excluded from consideration for recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action, or be denied any benefits or participation in any programs or activities which it operates on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, handicap, age, or veteran status (except where age, sex, or handicap constitute a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration). The Texas Education Agency makes positive efforts to employ and advance in employment all protected groups.

Texas Education Agency
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